



PSYCHOSOCIAL ADJUSTMENT AND STRUCTURE OF FAMILY: A COMPARISON BETWEEN JOINT AND NUCLEAR FAMILIES

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ABSTRACT

The adolescence is a turning point in the life of an individual with varied changes in the physical and psychological growth and development, which leads to psychosocial adjustment problems in the family. The gradual changes in the structure and conditions of the family as a result of the social and technological changes in the society play a pivotal role in mounting the problem high ever than before. Family as the primary social group of the individual to adjust with and molding a socially accepted behavior to lead a smooth social life. The present study is to analyze and compare the psychosocial adjustment of adolescents in nuclear and joint family and it focuses on the effect of changes in the family system in the psycho-social adjustment of adolescent children. The study was conducted in the central region of erstwhile 'Travancore' state now in the southern part of Kerala, which is known for the existence of both type of family systems even in present times. Sixty families were selected from each type of family by using the purposive method of sampling constitute a sample of 120. Data collection was conducted through personal meeting with the respondents. The study reveals that, in nuclear family the adolescent is accepted with more understanding and there for they adjust with the nuclear family and society. They develops better coping skills to face the life situations as against the traditional belief of joint family system is better environment for learning psychosocial adjustment skills.

KEY WORDS: Psychosocial adjustment, adolescents, joint family, Nuclear family.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a period rapid physical and psychological changes which leads to stress, strain and crisis among the children specifically in the age between 12- to 18. It is a significant period to shape up the personality of an individual. The living conditions, social environment and family structure play a significant role in determining character and behavioral patterns of the adolescents children. In this period, they go through a series of situations such as identity crisis, withdrawal, opposition with parents, increased independence, over confidence, stress, null social intelligence etc. Apart fear, stress, expectations and black out, they seems to be apathetic towards the socially important events and issues occurring around them. They feel indifferent or inactive on the matters concerned with them or others in the family. Nowadays, adolescence is considered to be a phase of transformation of pre-existing bonds and of renegotiation of the parents-child relationship, a phase characterized by harmony between generations, by shared cultural norms and values, and by the search for a space where self-fulfillment is possible within the family. Therefore, it is now more common to talk about adolescents renegotiating their relationships with their parents and moving gradually toward having more autonomy and independence (Eugenia Scabini, et al 199)

The psychosocial adjustment of adolescence is defined by WHO (1997) as "a person's ability to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life". In earlier times to the recent past, joint family system was a common entity in Kerala – a southern state in India, and a gradual change over to the nuclear family system become prominent due to the sociological, demographical and technological reasons. The members of the family lived together under one roof on thread of blood relations and on socio-economic factors. But this situation has been changing day by day, the joint family system began to disappear and it gives way to Nuclear family settings. The decline in the dependency on the agricultural livelihood and migration of people for better employment opportunities are seem to be the two major reasons for the transition of joint family system in to nuclear family. The social change had its impacts on the family set up too. In a nuclear family, the deed and words of an adolescent were taken in to due consideration as compare to giving less impotence in a joint family. Thus, these changes paved the way for different social relations within and outside the family. Contrary to the general opinion that the joint family is promoting and maintaining better psycho-social adjustment skill among the generations, the study focuses on the role of both the family system in shaping the psycho-social aspects of the adolescent character.

Adolescent children and family relationships

The quality of family relationships is a crucial determinant of the competence and confidence with which young people face the major transition from childhood to adulthood that we call adolescence (Noller, 1995). The adolescent age of children is considered as the second most important period in which a radical change occurred at the physical and psychological level within a short span of time. This will be resulted in the coping capacity of the child with the surround-

ing and develops troubles in the adjustment ability of the child. The psychosocial adjustments means to the mind's ability to, consciously or unconsciously, adjust and relates the body / mind to the social environment. A number of family and social factors are responsible for determining the adjustment behavior of adolescents and identify the level of family support. Studies on influence of type of families evident in many studies with different categorization of family on the basis of its structure, culture, relationship etc.

Children in intact families (living with both biological parents) tend to exhibit better emotional and psychological well-being and are less likely to exhibit behavioral problems such as school violence, juvenile delinquency and substance abuse. In addition, they tend to have higher grades. Adolescents living in intact families reported, on average, having closer relationships with their fathers compared to peers living in blended families or in divorced or never-married single parent families, controlling for adolescents' age, race, gender, and family income. This was true among youth in their early adolescence. (Christina Falci - 2006). Family structure is also associated with the incidence of depression among youths. Adolescents living in single-mother family structures were more likely to report depressive tendencies when compared to those living in non-divorced, two biological parent family structures. (K. Breivik -2006)

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METHODOLOGY

Society undergoes a drastic change in the familial system and the relationship among the members of the family and society. The role of adolescents in the family is redefined as the changes and the mode of adjustment in the various conditions faced by the members of the family. The researcher focused on the effect of changes in the family system on the psycho-social adjustment of adolescent children. Sixty families were selected from each type of family by using the purposive method of sampling constitute a sample of 120. Data collection was conducted through personal meeting with the respondents. The structured schedule include different sections for self-reported level of factors which determine the psychosocial adjustment of adolescents viz. Personality characteristics, self esteem, behavioral patterns, school grade, trouble at school, adolescent's perceptions on parental care and warmth, caring from adult and peers, Neighborhood friendship, romantic attraction and relationships were assessed. These two types of families were compared on the basis of major variables such as:

(a) Communication between parent and child (b) Subject of discussion; (c) Participation in the family's decision-making on subject related to the adolescent; (d) the adolescent's future orientation.

The study was framed on the hypothesis that “adolescents in joint family and nuclear family may have significant variations in the psycho-social adjustment. A descriptive research design was used for the study and a sample of 60 families each were selected from both type of joint and nuclear family, to constitute a total sample of 120 families. The respondents of the present study are adolescent children between the age 12 and 18. A structured interview schedule was administered for the collection of data and statistical methods are used for analysis.

ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

On the basis of the findings derived from this research study portray that the majority of the respondents from joint family were school children and a major portion of the respondents from the nuclear family were doing their degree or diplomas. It is interestingly noted that more than half (57.7%) of the respondents from joint family showed low level of psycho-social adjustment than that from the Nuclear family. Whereas in the case of adjustment with the educational situations, a large percentage (77%) of children belong to the nuclear family shows moderate level of adjustment than that among the children from the joint family (22%). The other dimensions considered for assessing the psycho-social adjustment skills of the adolescents are their self esteem, perception on parental care, parent-adolescent relationship, Trouble with school and education and Romantic relationship and future choice etc.

Self Esteem:

Self esteem of adolescents are generally high among the children of nuclear family is more evident and particularly girls from nuclear family show higher level of self esteem than that of male respondents. In joint family, children have moderate level of self esteem among the male and low level among girl children as a result of the dependency and lack of decision making skill.

Perception on parental care:

Parental care factor is moderate level among adolescents of joint family in comparison with a high level in the nuclear family. Children feel more independence in the nuclear family. A high majority of adolescents (82%) supports for the independence and care parents in the nuclear family than less than half children (44%) in the joint family. To find out the perception on parental care, ANOVA were performed with type of family as an independent variable and parent child relation as dependent variable. It is emerged from the analysis that parents and adolescents show better care and friendship in nuclear family than that in the joint family. (see Table 1)

Table 1. Parental care: Perception on parental care- means, Standard Deviations and result of ANOVA between Nuclear and Joint families

Perception on parental care -	Type of Family	Means	SD	Nuclear	Joint
Father- Adolescent	Nuclear	18.20	6.21	19.21	237
	Joint	13.10	5.32		
Mother - Adolescent	Nuclear	19.33	6.5	42.03	242
	Joint	13.34	7.1		
Adolescent - Father	Nuclear	16.65	6.11	8.08	243
	Joint	11.70	6.89		
Adolescent - Mother	Nuclear	17.65	6.56	27.92	254
	Joint	11.03	7.01		

P<0.01

Parent- child relationship:

In nuclear families, the relationship of father- adolescents and Mother – adolescent relationship show no significant differences in the perception regarding the relationship. In joint families the comparative mean score shows significant differences in the perception on relationship (Table II). The data show that, parents of nuclear family shared almost same perception towards the parent- child relationship. This meant that in nuclear families, the parent act in a closely rational way with their children. But on the other hand, in joint families it represent that each member of the big family hold their own views and perceptions and they try to exert it on the adolescents of the family which create adjustment problems among the adolescence.

Table II. Parent- child relationship: t-test

	Type of Family	t-value	P<
Father-Adolescent	Nuclear	2.99	0.05
	Joint	4.11	0.001
Mother-Adolescent	Nuclear	1.82	ns
	Joint	6.23	0.001

The parent – adolescent relationship is depend on number of factors like communication, friendship, opinion on issues and discussion. Analysis shows that in nuclear family the members have no other choices of people for discussion other than their limited family members. So the conversations, discussions opinion making etc. are more frequent in nuclear family than the joint family environment.

Trouble with school and education:

Another significant finding from the study is a tendency of increasing the level of psycho-social adjustment of respondents from joint family according with their educational level. Whereas it shows a sharp decrease in the nuclear family. Trouble with school and education less among the children from joint family is a notable factor which shows some thing is lacking with nuclear family

Romantic relationship and future choice:

Developing romantic relationship by adolescents from nuclear family is more common than that in the joint family. Because of more autonomy in the decision making among the adolescents in the nuclear family supports them in developing new relationship but they receives less support from the family in the problem circumstances. In nuclear family, a higher percentage of adolescents (72%) discuss their future aspirations with the parents (Mother -70.24%, father - 73.88%).

DISCUSSIONS

The present research study was to expose few characteristics features of the Nuclear and joint families, particularly with the factors which responsible for the psycho-social adjustment of adolescents. At a great extent the environment of nuclear family very well cooperate with the adjustment dimensions considered for the study. The major dimensions of the study restricted around the following four area.

1). Personal adjustment, 2). Family adjustment, 3). Educational adjustment and 4). Social adjustment. Different characteristic factors related with the adjustment of adolescents under these four dimensions were analysed to assess the overall psycho social adjustment levels of adolescents. Self Esteem is one of the major factors of personal adjustment, is found higher among the adolescents of nuclear family than that of the joint family. It is the result of the personal attention and independence received by the adolescents in nuclear families. The family adjustment of adolescents are balancing up on the degree of parental care and the level of personal relationship between the parents and adolescents. Adolescents in nuclear family develops better interpersonal skill through the independent and free communication, acceptance of opinion, acknowledgment of abilities and free discussion of personal and social issues. In the case of trouble with school and education, the adolescents from nuclear family show notable adjustment problems than those from the joint family due to the lack of sharing nature and social attachment. The autonomy in the decision making and expressed individual attention may be given more freedom to plan the future and develop new relationship by the adolescents of nuclear family than that among the adolescents of the joint family.

CONCLUSION

Even though the protected environment in the joint family helps very much to mould the personality of the adolescents, the lack of training to deal with the changed social and psychological environment, they have to face became a serious adjustment problem for them. This study could not cover all the aspects of psycho-social adjustment in both categories of family. But it could be an attempt to look at some of the major spots which determine the effect of structural factors of family on psycho- social adjustment of adolescent children.

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